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Hit by a series of cutbacks and shakeups, the nation's intelligence agencies are locked in a struggle for money and power. Meanwhile, efforts to keep watch on the Soviet Union have been hurt.

THE BATTLE OVER US INTELLIGENCE

BY BONNER DAY, SENIOR EDITOR

THE US intelligence community is in a battle for money and power at a time when its product, vital information about the aims and activities of foreign countries, has never been more in demand.

The struggle is the result of public criticism of intelligence abuses, combined with repeated actions to cut spending and manpower in this critical area.

For the past five years, US intelligence organizations have been buffeted by congressional investigations, damaging publicity, and a series of personnel purges.

All parts of the intelligence community have been affected, including the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Defense Department's National Security Agency, and the other military intelligence services. The Central Intelligence Agency, in its role of coordinator for all national intelligence, has been a principal target.

The latest in a series of shakeups of the intelligence community was ordered by President Carter in January. Next to come is a new intelligence charter, now being studied by the Senate and House, that would set the President's executive order on intelligence into law, after adding a number of congressional twists.

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Veteran intellig and investigations, combined with the money pinch, have hurt the intelligence efforts of the US. Further, a significant number are convinced that intelligence reports have declined in quantity, timeliness, and accuracy over a period of several years.

Military intelligence officers are particularly disturbed that the frequent reorganizations of the intelligence community have put more authority each time into the hands of a single person—the Director of Central Intelligence—and diminished the military voice in the critical decisions over budgets and intelligence assignments.

For military intelligence organizations, this trend means fewer dollars in the annual budget scramble. More importantly, military intelligence chiefs fear they will have less say over what the agencies under them can collect.

Still, military intelligence officers interviewed by AIR FORCE Magazine are optimistic about the nation's intelligence. They say the increasing use of modern technology for collecting intelligence—particularly satellite photography and electronic listening devices—could make intelligence more accurate than ever before. If the current turbulence within the US intelligence community can be resolved satisfactorily, they predict, the intelligence available to the nation's policymakers will be improving sharply in the years ahead.

The guidelines Congress and the Carter Administration have prepared are designed to provide additional checks on potential abuses by intelligence agencies.

Some military intelligence officers note that while it has been the civilian CIA that has been most criticized for abuses, each new reform has given the Director of Central Intelligence more authority, at the expense of the military intelligence services.

The New Rules

The guidelines Congress and the Carter Administration have prepared are designed to provide additional checks on the activities of intelligence agencies.

President Carter announced his reform in January. In 1971 and 1975, major guidelines were issued during the Nixon and Ford Administrations. Says one military intelligence expert: "Each President seems bent on putting his individual stamp on the intelligence community."

Under President Carter's Executive Order 12036, two committees of the National Security Council—The Special Coordination Committee and the Policy Review Committee—have direct supervision of all US intelligence.

The Coordination Committee, chaired by National

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